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St. John's, Newfoundland.

President Coaker Speaks On Prohibition

Puts a Few Hard Ones to Currie, Le-Feuvre and Other Champions of Temperance--A Speech That Will Appeal to All Sincere Believers in Temperance

MR. COAKER—Mr. Chairman, I cannot say that I can compliment the Premier on the stand that he has taken in connection with this matter. He has admitted in his address that the liquor question is an evil. Now, if he recognizes that this is an evil, why does he take all the trouble of asking the people whether they are going to vote for it or against it. If liquor is an evil so great as he makes out, why does he hesitate to do away with it. For my part I am ready to vote here and now for total prohibition, excluding everything in the shape of liquor—wines and all the rest of it—and from what we have heard from the other side of the House the main objection is to the present form of the Resolutions. Now we do not intend to let them get out of it in that way. We represent districts which I consider have given mandates in favor of Prohibition, even though Local Option may have no connection with Prohibition, but I go so far as to say, sir, that all the Northern Districts when they cut out liquor in their own section are quite prepared to exclude it from the whole country, but knowing that they had no opportunity to do that, the only thing they could do was to cut it out of their own district, and they have done so. But if the Government have resolved to vote down that Resolution, they can do so. We cannot force them. As far as I am concerned, I regret that the Premier did not long ago make this announcement on the Temperance question. Fourteen months ago this matter was brought before him, and up till to-day we have not heard a word about it, and it is my opinion that we would never have heard of it again if this Resolution had not come before the House to-day. Personally I am opposed to liquor. I believe that the man who does not take liquor at all is the best off. I do not think that the man who takes liquor in moderation is any worse than I am, but I think he would be better off without it. I have always been convinced that liquor is an evil, and all my life I have been a temperance man, and I have always favoured the temperance folks because I have seen many a poor chap go to the bad through liquor. Now, I do not know what will be the effect of the Government's measure, and in order to have this Prohibition matter copper-fastened I am going to move an amendment to the Resolutions. I intend to move this amendment because I do not want the issues of the present session to turn out fruitless. I must, however, say that I cannot altogether agree with the hon. member for Bonavista, Mr. Morine, as regards the view he has just laid down in reference to consulting the people. I do believe the people ought to be consulted in great issues, such as we are now at present facing, and I thoroughly agree with the views maintained by members of the opposite side who have expressed their opinion in this respect. For in a difficulty such as the present I think the people ought to have the last word.

I ask the member for Burin what he means when he states that any plebiscite must be carried by a majority of the votes of the electorate, as the member for St. John's East states that he considers a majority of the votes on the voter's list would be necessary to be passed in favor of Prohibition, according to his estimation of what percentage is necessary in order to enforce the measure. In view of such a statement, I would like to know from Mr. Currie what his opinions are with regard to this matter. Does he still insist upon a limit and that that limit should amount to 50 per cent of the votes of the electorate?

This matter of Prohibition has been bluffed by the members on the opposite side. If they really and truly intended to carry Prohibition, they would not vote against the amendment proposed by me to-day. They go outside and preach temperance and then come in here and say they will not vote for such an amendment as

that which I proposed here to-day. The Hon. Member for St. John's East, Mr. Higgins, states that the history of the present government has been that they have acceded to the people's wishes with regard to Temperance matters. He seems to forget that in the past many of the petitions sent in by the people have been ignored and treated with contempt. A large number of petitions from all parts of the country came in three or four years ago in connection with granting the women a vote of Temperance. Those petitions were treated with contempt and nothing whatever was heard of them. Last year at the closing part of the Session, the Temperance people again presented petitions asking for a plebiscite, but nothing was done. Then a number of the citizens of St. John's presented a petition asking for the appointment of a Board of Commissioners to manage the affairs of St. John's. The prayer of that petition was very soon acceded to, and, as a result, a law was passed appointing a Commission to run the Municipal affairs of St. John's. The request of the Temperance people, though, was treated with contempt, and, up to the present time nothing has been heard of it.

If the Government had any intention of moving in the matter of Temperance, they would have mentioned it in the Speech from the Throne, but not a sound about Temperance has been heard from the Premier for the past fourteen months, and had it not been for Mr. Hickman's resolution to-day, nothing would have been heard for a much longer time.

We have been accused of doubting the Government in this matter. For my part, I have no hesitation in saying that I do doubt the Government and its promises, for during the last two sessions we have heard nothing but promises from them and very few of them have been fulfilled. Now they are making a Party measure of Prohibition in order that they may flash the Party whip over the backs of their supporters and carry through a measure which will be of no effect so far as acceding to the wishes of Temperance people is concerned.

The F.P.U. members on this side of the House are sincere and believe in Temperance, and further believe that the carrying of Prohibition would mean conferring upon the country one of the greatest blessings that could be bestowed upon it. From what we have seen here to-day, we may make up our minds that the Government and its supporters will do all they can to prevent the country from having Prohibition. The Temperance people might as well go away for they will not get from this Government what they want.

The member for St. John's East, Mr. Higgins, has stated that I have changed my views to meet the opinions of Mr. Morine. I would challenge him to mention one instance in which I have changed my views in order to suit them to Mr. Morine's opinions. If he has any proof, I shall be glad if he will now offer it. He says the Government would not live forty-eight hours if it did not accede to the wishes of the people. We have heard that statement time and again. But who is going to turn them out? Is it to be the members on the Opposite side? Who among them will stop the bootle and break the golden chain which binds them one to the other, in order to carry this Prohibition measure? They cannot stay in power very much longer. When an opportunity offers, the people will not hesitate in turning them out. If we were as sure that Prohibition would be carried as we are that the Government will be turned out when the first opportunity offers at the polls, then there will be an easy victory for Prohibition.

They talk about carrying Prohibition by a majority vote of the electorate. This shows very poor taste for a party which has been ruling the country for two years with nothing at its back but a minority vote. Had it been necessary for the Government con-

trolling this Country to be backed by a majority of the electors, the Morris Government would not have been returned in 1913, for the Opposition Party to-day represents 3000 votes more than the Government.

Last year we trusted to the word of the Premier in connection with the filling of the two departmental vacancies in this House, and what do we find? We find that his Party was so weak in the country that he dared not open a single District of the country in order to return a Minister to fill the vacant positions. He was compelled to place defeated candidates in the Upper House and then made them Ministers of the Crown. These two brilliant men were turned down by their constituents in 1913, and in face of their defeat, they were glad enough to be pitchedforked into positions into which they well knew the electorate, if it had been consulted, would never have placed them. Members on the opposite side of the House who were qualified to fill those positions were ignored, and the rights of Districts such as Placentia and Harbour Grace, which have always been represented in the Executive, were turned down in order to place Dummy Ministers in the Upper House and to give them positions which have always been occupied by members of this House. If the members on the opposite side of the House can put up with this treatment, they can put up with anything, and it is hardly worth while to talk about right and wrong, or making promises and breaking promises.

The Member for Burin will regret his action in this matter, for his constituents in Burin District will soon find out what a consistent Temperance advocate he is when they hear of his conduct in connection with the amendment now before the House.

Who can blame us, then, for doubting the promises of the Government? Last year when we brought up in this House a very serious matter in connection with the Minister of Finance and Customs we were told that it was going to be investigated in the Supreme Court. Well that has been done and where is the investigation now? Are we going to have a result like that in connection with these promises for Prohibition? We want you to put in black and white what you are going to do in this matter which comes up for consideration year after year we want you to bring in a bill to hold an election and if the people vote in favor of Prohibition then let us have it once and for all. You have a chance to pass total Prohibition right here and now. There are some men on our side of the House of pronounced temperance principles and we will all vote for it. What is the need for all this row that has been started over this measure. We do not want it. Things have been going very smoothly for the two weeks that we have been sitting. There has not been a division of the House, and up to the present there has never been a session when government and opposition have worked so well together. But if you want something else in place that and if you want trouble I for my part am quite prepared to give it to you. Now I wonder if I can ask the Premier to tell me exactly what he is going to do in this matter and if his explanation is satisfactory we may be able to drop the whole matter and withdraw this amendment to the Resolution. As a matter of fact I know that quite a number of members on that side of the House will vote against the Resolutions and against the amendment because they think we are endeavoring to make political capital out of this question. Well, now I promise you that if you will meet us half way we for our part will attempt to make no political capital out of it. We are only to do our best in the interests of this question. We are all determined that we shall have Prohibition and I believe that if we pass it you will be doing the best thing that you will have ever done for the country. I believe that sincerely and

truly and I will work for it and do all in my power for it. Now a good many members of the House believe the same and where will you find the man who will go out of this House and say that he voted against Prohibition being put into force in this country. Well then if we agree on that why can't the Premier get up and say that he will bring in a bill providing for those proposals laid down in the Amendment. If he will do that we are satisfied. We are not divided on the matter and we all say that he would like to see these temperance reforms in operation. Why then don't you get to work and settle the matter once and for all. It is too serious a matter to be fighting about and we have been talking about it for the past two years. There have been too much talk and too little results. The time has come now for action and if nothing comes out of those resolutions the Government will be to blame.

BLACK HAND HERE!

It is understood that there are several members of the Black Hand in the city at present. They were seen coming from a forge a few evenings ago, at about six o'clock. An amateur Sherlock Holmes got busy, and saw them an hour later coming from their boarding house. They were disguised, for their hands were no longer black. Enquiry revealed the fact that in the interim they had used FLASH, which easily removes all stains, no matter how ingrained they may be, without injury to the most delicate skin.

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